

Henry Schmitt Grocery Store
(I&K Grocery)
1224 2nd Avenue
Fourth Ward Neighborhood
Altoona
Blair County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5824

HABS
PA,
7-ALTO,
75-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HENRY SCHMITT GROCERY STORE
(I&K Grocery)

Location: 1224 2nd Avenue

Date of Erection: 1906-07

Description: Located amid the domestic structures along 1st Avenue, yet built in a commercial style, this two-story brick structure clearly marks itself as a neighborhood business. Currently the home of I & K Grocery, it has housed a variety of neighborhood grocery stores over the years. The owners and proprietors have often lived nearby, members on two counts of the local community.

Built of brick veneer on a wooden frame, the first floor houses a grocery store while a door at the right front leads to a second-floor apartment. Glass display windows still flank the recessed store entrance, although they are now filled in with painted plywood above door height. Transom lights were once part of the entire storefront and apartment entrance door. Two large wood brackets joined by a slight projecting eave make a strong visual break between the commercial first story and the three-bay apartment above. In the second floor, windows are decorated with stone lintels and sills and a wide corbelled cornice rises to flat-topped parapet-like projections at each front corner. A small stone block with the number 1224 is centered above the central window.

History: Development in this part of the Fourth Ward was sufficiently late that no previous structure ever occupied the site of this turn-of-the-century commercial structure.

As tax records indicate, Henry C. Schmitt's vacant lot at 1224 2nd Ave. became a "store room" between 1906 and 1907. Sanborn maps suggest that brick casing was added between 1909 and 1932. Schmitt, a carpenter originally from New York City, acquired this lot in 1892 and lived next door at No. 1226 (previously numbered 1224) from 1896 until sometime between 1919 and 1921 Schmitt moved his home around the corner to 204 13th St. During the 1920s he stopped running the grocery himself, since by 1930 his occupation is listed as timekeeper. For a short time around 1936, the store served as one of many Altoona branches of the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Co, or A & P Store. In 1939, Paul W. Alberts was the grocer at this address; husband and wife George F. Cornet, a radio engineer, and Emily F. Cornet rented the upstairs apartment. Since Alberts was a branch manager for A & P in 1930, it is possible that he worked for them at this address before taking over operations. Residents in the upstairs apartment changed frequently. In 1951, Paul F. Greene, perhaps related to the Schmitt family, was the grocer here.

Henry Schmitt died May 29, 1939. In April 1954 his daughters Edna C. Wilson, a widow, and Bertha A. Green and her husband sold the half-lot containing the store to Leah H. and Mary M. Graham for \$5,500. The 1955 Altoona Directory shows Leah and Mary owning and running the Graham Market, living next door at No. 1222. In 1966, Leah E. Graham sold the store; it has been operated since by the present owner.

Locally, the store was known respectively as Smitty's, Albert's, and Graham's.

Sources: Maps: 1882, 1909, 1932. Deed books: 28/218, 28/224, 84/440, 85/440, 90/448, 689/533, 950/177, 844/582. City directories. Tax assessment records.

Project Information: This report was part of a larger project to document the city of Altoona, Pennsylvania. The project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), Robert Kapsch, chief, at the request of America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP), Randy Cooley, director. Overviews of the history of the city (HABS No. PA-5784) and the fourth ward neighborhood

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(HABS No. PA-5786) provide context for these buildings as well as a comprehensive list of sources. See also additional HABS reports on buildings in the city and other neighborhoods.

This report was prepared by Susan Garfinkel in the summer of 1989 under the supervision of HABS senior historian Alison K. Hoagland and Kim E. Wallace, supervisory historian. Garfinkel's and other project historians' work was published as Railroad City: Four Historic Neighborhoods in Altoona, Pennsylvania (Washington, D.C.: HABS/HAER, National Park Service, 1990), edited by Kim E. Wallace, supervisory historian, and Sara Amy Leach, HABS historian.